

## Remarks on the American Lady Ferns

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That the Lady Ferns, placed by Linnaeus under *Poly-podium*, deserve assignment to another genus was recognized by Roth in 1799, and the name *Athyrium* was proposed. The lumping of this genus with *Asplenium* was perpetrated by Bernhardt in 1806, and accepted by the conservatives of the succeeding hundred years. Today, however, Roth's view is favored; and in Copeland's recent *Genera Filicum* *Athyrium* and *Asplenium* are even placed in separate families—Aspidiaceae and Aspleniaceae respectively.

Differences between east-American and Eurasian-west-American Lady Ferns were early noted. First, a southern entity found "from New England to Carolina" was named *Nephrodium asplenioides* by Michaux in 1803, and transferred to *Athyrium* by Eaton in 1817. Then a more northern one, received from "Canada," was designated *Aspidium angustum* by Willdenow in 1810, and assigned to *Athyrium* by Presl in 1825. Numerous other epithets were proposed for members of this assemblage in subsequent years, but in 1917 Butters brought order out of chaos by recognizing three species, each with multiple varieties and forms: respectively Eurasian-west-American, northeast-American, and southeast-American.

During the succeeding 30 years this taxonomic system has been widely accepted by American fern students, amateur and professional alike, and one might have hoped that the situation was stabilized. However, we learn now (Fernald, 1946) that in the forthcoming edition of Gray's *Manual*, the nomenclature is to be rearranged, and the east-American entities made varieties of the circumboreal *Athyrium filix-femina*. This is to